

Palm Sunday

Luke 19:28 - 44 (NIV)

²⁸After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ³⁰“Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it.’” ³²Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. ³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” ³⁴They replied, “The Lord needs it.” ³⁵They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. ³⁶As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: ³⁸“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! ‘Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’” ³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” ⁴⁰“I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.” ⁴¹As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴²and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

Theme: Don’t Miss His Coming

There are many important things in life that we don’t want to miss. As a father, you don’t want to miss the birth of your child. There might be a phone call for a job offer or something else that is important, which we don’t want to miss. If an old friend stops by unexpectedly, we might feel bad if we didn’t happen to be home at the time. We also wouldn’t want to miss our name being called a the winner of a drawing of something that we really wanted to win.

There is nothing more important to us than the coming of the Lord. It was a tragedy on that Palm Sunday that most of Jerusalem didn’t realize the significance of that day. It is our prayer that we don’t miss the Lord’s coming when He comes to us today.

I. He plans His coming down to the smallest detail.

He did so on Palm Sunday. Jesus knew exactly where the donkey would be that He would use. He knew that when the disciples took the donkey, someone would ask why they were taking it. He also knew that if the disciples just said, “*The Lord needs it,*” the people would let them take the donkey. This was the day that He would fulfill Zechariah 9:9, “*Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation, humble and riding on a donkey.*”

The Lord was about to ride into Jerusalem to accomplish our salvation. That meant that there would be celebration. His disciples put their cloaks on the road. They cut palm branches and shouted, “*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!*” There were Pharisees who told Jesus to rebuke His disciples, but Jesus said, “*I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.*” Christ

was coming as our Savior. This was a day of celebration. In fact, all of history had been centered around what would happen this day. Christ was coming to give His life as the perfect sacrifice for all of our sins. He was coming to bring salvation.

He also plans everything right down to the smallest detail to bring salvation to each of us. Paul writes in Ephesians 1, *“God chose us in Christ.. before the creation of the world.”* He goes on to write, *“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.”* The point is that just as Christ had everything planned to bring salvation to the world on Palm Sunday, He had everything planned to bring salvation to each one of us personally. He knew your name even before the world was created. He knew you even before you were born. If your parents brought you to the baptismal font when you were a baby, He planned to bring you to faith through those God-fearing parents. If someone shared Christ with you later in life, it was all part of God’s plan for you to know about Jesus Christ as your Savior. God had everything planned right down to your being here today that you can hear that Jesus Christ came into this world for the forgiveness of your sins. He wants to take away your sin and make you into a beloved child of God.

-Our Lord comes to you this day as your Savior.

II. It breaks His heart when He is rejected.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem. We often have the idea that the people of Jerusalem were putting their cloaks on the road and waving the palm branches, but actually this all happened when Jesus started on the Mount of Olives before Jesus got to Jerusalem. When Jesus got closer to the city, He began to weep. He cried out, *“If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes...They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”* Christ came to Jerusalem, but most people would not recognize the significance of this day. In fact, the majority of the people would reject Him. They would cry out, *“Crucify Him!”* Because they missed the day of the Lord’s coming and rejected Him, the city would receive God’s judgement rather than His salvation. He came to bring peace, but the people rejected that peace.

It broke Jesus’ heart that they would receive judgement rather than salvation. This tells us a lot about Jesus’ heart. He does not delight in punishing us for our sins. This is brought out in Ezekiel 33:11 where God says, *“‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?’* Christ wept over the rejection by Jerusalem. It grieved Him that they rejected the peace and salvation that He came to bring.

Do we grieve the Lord in the same way today? Christ comes to you and me today. He might not come on a donkey, but He comes in a very humble ways, in His Word and Sacrament. He came to you the day that you were baptized in His name. He comes every time that you hear the Gospel that Jesus Christ gave His life in your place on that cross for the forgiveness of your sins. It doesn’t matter if that message is shared by a pastor, your parents, a friend or even one of your children. Whenever you hear that Gospel of God’s love for you in Christ, our Savior is coming to you. He comes every time that you kneel at this altar and receive His body and blood which were given and shed for the forgiveness of your sins.

So often today, He is received with indifference and even unbelief. It seems that each year our faith is attacked the most both at Christmas and at Easter time. Just like the Pharisees in our text, there are many voices that want those who praise Christ to be silent. But it grieves our Lord most when those who have heard the Gospel and have been brought up in the faith reject Him. Sometimes we reject Him for other joys, even those which are sinful. We love our sin and the joys of this world more than we want His forgiveness of our sins. Sometimes we think that we don't really need His salvation. We can help ourselves. When He has come to us, but we reject Him and His salvation, it breaks His heart and causes Him to weep over us, just as He wept over Jerusalem.

III. But it gives Jesus the greatest joy of all when we receive Him as our Savior.

Shortly before Jesus rode into Jerusalem, He passed through Jericho. There was a man named Zacchaeus, who wanted to see Jesus. The Lord came to Him and asked to come to his home. Zacchaeus received the Lord joyfully. He repented of his sin, and trusted in Christ's forgiveness. The Lord said, *"Today salvation has come to this house,...for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."* Christ rejoiced that Zacchaeus came to faith. It would even bring Him joy on the cross when one of the thieves would turn to Him and say, *"Jesus, remember me in your kingdom."* There is nothing that makes Jesus happier today than when our eyes are opened. We recognize that in Christ God has come to us. We see Him as our Savior, we confess our sins and trust in His forgiving love for us. As Christians we come to know that in Christ God's salvation has come to us and there is nothing that could ever separate us from His love.

One German Good Friday hymn, which I often sing is, "Jesu, der du wollest büßen, für die Sünden aller Welt," which is translated, "Jesus, Your desire is to atone for the sins of the whole world." The hymn describes the Lord's passion for us. The refrain at the end of almost every verse has always struck me, "Jesus, lass dein Angst und Pein nicht an mir verloren sein," which is translated, "Jesus, may Your anguish and suffering, not be wasted on me." He came to pay for the sins of the whole world. He wants every one of us to have a part in His salvation. We pray that when that Gospel comes to us as it does today, that it will not be wasted, but that God will open our eyes to the salvation that Christ has won for us. May His anguish and suffering bring us peace, hope, and real joy through faith in Him.

Amen.

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